

SPEECHES / DOCUMENTS

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**Remarks of the Director of Central Intelligence
George J. Tenet
at the
Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner
June 28, 1999**

I know that you all were expecting Tom Cruise or Harrison Ford. I am very sorry you got the short, fat guy from Queens. I am very grateful to the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce for the opportunity to address this distinguished group of New Hampshire patriots. I want you to know that I am probably the only person you will see here all year who is not campaigning for a job!

I already have the very best job in the world. It's unusual for me to make public speeches, but I believe it is important from time to time to talk to the American people in communities across the country about the importance of intelligence. I believe that when you hear about our commitment to the safety of Americans everywhere -- when you hear about the courage and selflessness of the men and women of US Intelligence -- you will conclude that as a taxpayer, the best dollar your government spends is spent on intelligence.

The real reason I'm here tonight --and I think it's important to say this -- is principally because my friend, Congressman Charlie Bass, asked me to come. I want to tell you something about him. Charlie Bass makes a major contribution to our country through his service on the House Select Committee on Intelligence. I used to work on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. His work on the oversight Committee does not -- and cannot -- make headlines, but it is profoundly important. They call it a "Select" Committee because the members who serve on it are specially selected by the House Leadership. Charlie was chosen because the other members trust his judgment, they trust his integrity and they know his deep commitment to our national security. Serving on the Committee won't bring this district one more highway, one more bridge or one more tax break. It won't happen. The only credit he gets is your knowing that he silently and

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faithfully is trying to protect you and your families. And Charlie, the people of New Hampshire and the American people owe you a debt of gratitude. Charlie, I would have said that even if you weren't on the oversight Committee, I promise you.

This evening, I want to share with you my perspective on some of the key national security threats that our country faces at the turn of a new century.

Every single day, the men and women of US Intelligence provide an enormous unilateral advantage to the President of the United States. We cover the world -- a world that in the post-Cold War era has become more dangerous and more uncertain -- in order to give the President the opportunity to advance American interests.

- I can tell you tonight that in the last year, US Intelligence was responsible for stopping terrorist bombings against American facilities overseas.
- I can tell you that together with our law enforcement colleagues, we have scored major successes in breaking the back of drug cartels which try to destroy our kids.
- I can tell you that every day, our Non-Proliferation Center works to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of rogue states and terrorists.
- And I can tell you that time and again, our intelligence has alerted field commanders in Bosnia to security threats to our forces there. As a result, not a single American life has been lost to hostile action in Bosnia.

We do all of this and you never hear about it. We do all of this -- and more -- through a combination of very brave people undertaking daring operations in dangerous situations, conducting superior analysis -- men and women who serve silently in anonymity for the simple love of their country. And we do it with the greatest technology the world has ever seen.

From the Commander in Chief to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs down the line, our national leaders understand and depend upon the work of the US Intelligence Community. It is our job to call them like we see them regardless of political considerations or prevailing policy -- however inconvenient or unpleasant our message may be. Sometimes we call them right and sometimes we call them wrong. And when we're wrong we stand up and tell you. But I would argue that we have an impressive record of success. You bat 350, you go to the All-Star game. I think that we bat 750 every night. The taxpayers expect us to bat 1,000. That's the clear expectation that we're trying to beat every single day on the job.

The Changing Threat Environment

Someone asked me how I sleep at night. I don't sleep very well. I'm going to scare the living hell out of you tonight. I want to tell you about the world we face and why I think that America has to stay engaged and you need to stay focused on the national security needs of this country. I am struck by how many dangers confront American citizens and American interests across such a

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wide spectrum of issues. What is noteworthy to me is the manner in which so many issues are now intertwined and so many dangers are mutually reinforcing.

Why is this so? To some degree it involves historic legacies fueled by the continued crumbling of Cold War constraints. We see this in the ongoing turmoil of the Balkans, the increasing violence in Africa, and the renewed volatility of the Indian Subcontinent. In a very real sense, we live at a moment when the past and the future are colliding. We must still deal with terrorists, insurgents, and others who have hundreds of years of history fueling their causes—but the chances are that today they will be using laptop computers, sophisticated encryption, and weaponry their predecessors could not even have imagined.

Operationally speaking, in the post-Cold War era, the pace has been intense and unrelenting for all of us. We cannot relax our guard in a host of critical areas, even as we surge to meet the challenge of the moment -- whether it's Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Rwanda, Burundi, Iraq, or -- as it is now -- Kosovo. You may not like the policy choices that are made in those areas. I don't have that luxury. I have to support American forces and American diplomacy and deploy my assets to ensure that American people and American interests are protected when the President makes those kinds of decisions. That's the role of the Intelligence Community. We've just come out of a very tough situation in the Balkans and we're going into a tough situation even as peace goes forward.

Kosovo and the South Balkans

Six hundred ten years ago to this very day -- on June 28, 1389 -- the Serbs lost the battle of Kosovo Field to the Ottoman Turks. It is the historical moment around which Serbs have built their deep sense of nationhood and collective victimization. Serbs consider historic sites in Kosovo to be the cradle of their civilization. This helps to explain why their struggle to maintain control of the province has been so fierce.

Ten years ago, Milosevic whipped up nationalist fervor surrounding the 600th anniversary of the defeat at the battle of Kosovo Field to boost his climb to power. Imagine the celebration of a **defeat** -- a celebration that was bigger than our Bicentennial! Milosevic's most recent campaign of terror resulted in the largest forced migration in Europe since World War Two -- 1.5 million Kosovars were driven from their homes.

During the 78-day allied bombing campaign, as you would expect, US intelligence provided close intelligence support to our NATO alliance. What you may not realize is that in addition, we provided information to international relief agencies on the size, location, and condition of displaced people. And we made information available to the International War Crimes Tribunal so that people who are guilty of heinous crimes can be brought to justice. These are not traditional intelligence missions, but they are our responsibilities.

Now that the peace agreement has been reached, US Intelligence is supporting the international security deployed into Kosovo. I will tell you what every man and woman in uniform knows: good intelligence can save your life. This is a tense and chaotic time. There are mine fields and

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snipers and unexploded bombs. The combatants must be disarmed. Returning refugees and remaining Serbs alike must be protected from acts of revenge and reprisal. The danger to US and allied forces is as great now as it was during the air campaign.

The full consequences of the peace settlement are just starting to sink in in Serbia. But I don't believe we will have peace until Milosevic no longer serves as the leader of that country. Our job now is to help the US and our allies keep an uneasy peace -- to help them enforce the settlement in Kosovo and stabilize Albania and Macedonia. This will be a mission for US Intelligence for a very long time to come.

Bombing of the Chinese Embassy

Before I leave the Balkans, I want to say a few words about the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. I haven't spoken publicly about this, but I'm going to tell you what I told my workforce: We in the Intelligence Community bear a significant share of the responsibility for that tragic mistake. We stand up and take that responsibility. This is what we have done. I've told my workforce and the Congress what I am going to tell you now: I will not hide behind excuses such as stretched resources or time pressures. It is precisely when the pressure is intense -- and life or death decisions are being made -- that the President and the American people expect us to provide the best intelligence in the world. Clearly, in the case of the Chinese Embassy, we failed to do that. No excuses.

We thought we were targeting the headquarters of a Yugoslav government department that supports the Serbian military. No one targeted the Chinese Embassy. Let me say that again. Nobody targeted the Chinese Embassy. The unintended attack happened because of human error and because a number of systems and procedures to identify and verify the targets did not work as they should have.

All that having been said, I want to offer you some perspective: During the air campaign, over 9,300 sorties were flown and more than 500 fixed targets were accurately struck. Highly complex military operations were conducted without the loss of a single American life in combat. This record is due, in large part, to the extraordinary work done by the men and women of US Intelligence. The safety of American men and women in uniform was enhanced by the intimate knowledge that we provided of the weapons systems they were facing and the targets that they were up against. Today, our ability to strike more precisely has created the impression that sensitive sites can be forever safe in a war zone. We are victims of our own success. While we try to minimize the loss of life or other unintended damage, there is no such thing as risk-free military operations.

I know better than anybody else the excellent work that the men and women of my Agency and the Intelligence Community do each and every day -- that includes the great work that they have done on Kosovo, life-saving work that you as American taxpayers can all be proud of. The bombing of the Chinese Embassy was a tragic mistake. There is no excuse for it. But it stands in sharp contrast to an otherwise outstanding record of performance. And I want you to know that, and think about that, when people make jokes about us.

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Russia

I will now talk a little about Russia and about China, terrorism, and proliferation.

When the Cold War ended, everybody told my predecessor twice removed: "We don't need your Intelligence Community anymore. Russia is going to grow into a prosperous, free, democratic society. You guys are out of business." Well, I've got bad news for everybody. When we look at recent events -- when we think of the seizure of Kosovo's Pristina Airport by a few hundred Russian forces -- we realize that this had more to do with Russian domestic politics -- and the wounded pride of a superpower in decline -- than it did any serious effort by Moscow to support the Serbs.

Figuring out who and what runs Russia has become much more complicated since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The succession struggle for the Kremlin increasingly overshadows political actions. It will continue to produce shifting alliances and intrigues within the political elite in Moscow. Though everybody tends to focus on the latest political maneuverings, Russia's future depends as much -- if not more -- on the success or failure of economic reforms and integration into the world economy as it does on political outcomes. The financial crisis of last August has bottomed out, but popular frustration with economic reforms is growing, discrediting Russian reformers and feeding anti-American sentiments.

In the security sphere, the Russian military continues to deteriorate, but we find small comfort in that. Russia's defense industries depend on exports to survive. Export controls are ineffective. Corruption is widespread. We are deeply concerned about Russia's assistance to Iran in developing ballistic missiles. Thus far, Russia's strategic nuclear command and control system is functioning. But as long as there is the slightest doubt about the safety and security, and ultimate fate of its 5,500 nuclear warheads, Russia deserves our unrelenting focus. The big question is: In the next century, what role will Russia play in the evolving security environments of Europe and Asia? Spoiler? De-stabilizer? Stabilizer? Or all of the above? The bottom line is that there is still no consensus in Russia about the country's future direction. It is the job of US Intelligence to help our country prepare to meet all contingencies to protect our nation.

China

While today's Russia presents us with the problems of a Great Power on the decline, China poses challenges of a Great Power on the rise. What kind of Great Power will China become? Will it be a force for stability in East Asia or will it be the Prussia of the 21st Century? It is still very much an open issue.

On the one hand, China is proceeding with strategic modernization. But at the same time Beijing is unlikely to commit the kind of resources that the Soviet Union did to strategic nuclear forces. China proliferates weapons at a pace that causes us a great deal of concern and at the same time continues to place its best new military equipment opposite Taiwan -- the issue between our two

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countries that probably poses the greatest dangers.

On the other hand, the Chinese repeatedly have signaled that they want constructive bilateral relations with us. And they continue to press ahead with the World Trade Organization accession negotiations that are vital to integrating China into the world economy.

I know that you have been reading and hearing a lot about Chinese espionage. What may have occurred at our national labs is, of course, an ongoing issue and notwithstanding the fact that there have been leaks to the media, I am going to be very tight-lipped about it. My bottom line is this: we as a government made it too easy for the Chinese to spy on us and steal our secrets. It was unacceptable breach of security. We owe you better and our government didn't live up to the standards. I think that Senator Rudman has done a great job in outlining all this for the President and hopefully moving us forward.

You could say that today's China has one foot in the 20th century economically and the other politically in the 19th. Our interests in seeing successful political and economic transitions in both China and Russia in the 21st century remain high -- not least because both are among the world's leading proliferators, something that should cause us all a great deal of concern.

Proliferation

No issue is more emblematic of the new national security challenges facing our country than the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The last few years have seen nuclear tests in South Asia, continued concerns about Iraq's weapons programs, accelerated missile development in Iran, North Korea, Pakistan and India, and broader availability of biological and chemical weapons technologies. We are increasing our emphasis and resources on these areas, but I must tell you that there is a continued and growing risk of surprise to our country.

The ballistic missile story is not encouraging. A growing number of countries hostile to us and our allies -- countries like Iran and North Korea -- are acquiring and developing ballistic missile capabilities. Theater-range missiles with increasing range pose an immediate and growing threat to US interests, military forces, and allies. That threat is here and now. For example, Iran's development of a missile, the Shahab 3, can reach Israel, Saudi Arabia and all US forces in the Gulf.

Even more disturbing, foreign missiles of increased range and military potential are under development. For example, North Korea is developing missiles which could threaten the continental United States. And that is something we all have to worry about.

At least sixteen countries, including those with the missile programs mentioned earlier, currently have active chemical weapons programs, and perhaps a dozen are pursuing offensive biological weapons programs. And a number of these programs are run by countries with a history of sponsoring terrorism.

Terrorism

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I will turn now to the issue of terrorism. This is one that keeps me awake at night. We are seeing a whole new breed of terrorist – terrorists who don't need to be tethered to state sponsors for financial or technical support. Terrorists who have their own international networks. Usama bin Ladin exemplifies this new breed. He runs his own international web with operatives in at least 60 countries. I want you to think about that. He's not above blowing up our embassies with truck bombs, but he has also shown an active interest in chemical weapons. In fact, he has called the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (quote) "a religious duty." Last December, Bin Ladin declared that every American taxpayer is a target.

Together with other members of the Cabinet, I was at Andrews Air Force Base last August as the flag-draped coffins came home from our embassies in Nairobi and Dar Es Salaam. My colleagues and I vowed that their killers would be tracked down and brought to justice. Hard work by US intelligence and the FBI—and cooperation between us and our friends abroad—has led to the arrest of a number of Bin Ladin's protégés. Through this work we have averted additional bombings and saved lives. But make no mistake: Bin Ladin, his allies, and his sympathizers retain the will and the capacity to strike at us again. It is only a question of when, not if. He will hit us whenever and wherever he thinks we are vulnerable. This will be a long, relentless struggle. And all I can tell you is, we're doing everything in our power to stop more attacks from happening.

The Need for Global Vigilance

I have talked about a lot of things that keep me awake at night, but there are many others that I haven't mentioned.

The Sub-Continent and North Korea

As I speak, India and Pakistan, now both acknowledged nuclear powers, are dueling over Kashmir in a fight that could turn into full-scale war. So far, neither shows any sign of backing down, or of leaving a face-saving way out for the other. While, as has happened in the past, the conflict may remain localized, there is a danger of escalation. If the fighting expands to general war, it would be the first direct conflict between two nuclear powers. The chance of each side miscalculating the nuclear threshold of the other increases the dangers.

North Korea is a similarly difficult place, and I could go on and talk to you about Iraq and the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, about cyber warfare against the critical information infrastructures of the United States. Maybe they don't keep you up at night. But I want you to think about what the men and women of US Intelligence are up against.

Our Continuing Intelligence Mission

All of these threats are real and serious. But I have no doubt that US Intelligence will be equal to them. If you knew the men and women at CIA as I do, you would share my confidence. New Hampshire's motto: "Live Free or Die!" just about sums up the way they think about their work

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and our country. Seventy seven stars are carved in the granite wall of our headquarters at Langley, Virginia. The stars represent the seventy seven men and women who have been killed in the line of duty since our Agency was established. They gallantly gave their lives so that we could continue to live free in the greatest nation on the face of the Earth.

The United States stands for what is good in the world. We have a responsibility to stay engaged. Our national security demands that we in the intelligence, defense and law enforcement communities have all the tools and resources at our disposal to protect you, your children and your grandchildren. America's security is not free – and when you engage across the range of issues that we do – and take the risks that we do – sometimes things don't go well. I'm here to tell you that there is no perfection in the business of protecting America's interests, because there is no such thing as perfect security in the world that we live in.

I pledge to all of you that we at the CIA and in the Intelligence Community will do our part to faithfully execute our sacred responsibilities. We will do so with the highest standards of professionalism, with the deepest integrity, and in full keeping with our democratic principles and laws. We will do our part, and I know that all of you will be right there supporting us.

I want to thank you for taking the time to listen to me tonight. It has been a real honor and privilege for me to come here. It's great to be out of Washington and be with real people. Thank you all very, very much.

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